DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 313 861 EC 221 729

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TITLE Supported Transition to Integrated Preschools. Project STIP.
INSTITUTION San Francisco Unified School District, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. Handicapped Children's Early Education Program.
PUB DATE 88
GRANT G008530068
NOTE 56p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Delivery Systems; Demonstration Programs; *Disabilities; *Mainstreaming; *Parent Education; Parent School Relationship; *Preschool Education; Social Integration; *Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

The paper describes Project STIP (Supported Transition to Integrated Preschools), a demonstration project in San Francisco, California, which is developing and evaluating a model for integrating preschool children with special needs into regular education preschool programs. Project STIP also developed and evaluated a district-wide model for providing support to parents in the transition of their child into the school district preschool special education program. The model aims to give parents needed information to work with the school district in developing their child's educational program and adjusting to new educational systems and delivery models. The first section of the manual focuses on this parent support model, with subsections on: parent concerns and issues, assumptions underlying the providing of support, identifying family and community needs, providing a range of transition support services, the parent transition manual, supporting parents after placement in the preschool program, transition resources for parents, and transition resources for professionals. The second section deals with integrating preschool children, with subsections on: the rationale for integration, the integration specialist, maximizing integration opportunities, supporting and training regular education staff, supporting special educators, providing for parent involvement, and integration resources for professionals. Appendixes provide transition information, a list of integration specialist competencies, and integration inservice fliers. (DB)

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SUPPORTED TRANSITION TO INTEGRATED PRESCHOOLS

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with
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Project STIP
San Francisco Unified School District

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SUPPORTED TRANSITION TO INTEGRATED PRESCHOOLS

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WITH

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WE WISH TO EXTEND OUR APPRECIATION TO THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND STAFF OF YERBA BUENA, BURNETT, AND LAS AMERICAS CHILDREN'S CENTERS AND DR. CHARLES DREW AND HAWTHORNE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS. THEIR PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK WERE CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT. WE ALSO THANK PATTI WOOD, PROJECT STIP PARENT ADVISOR, FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS AND JOAN HEPPERLY, SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, FOR HER SUPPORT DURING THE CONCEPTION AND INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. SPECIAL THANKS MUST GO TO LINDA WARNER, CENTRAL ASSESSMENT UNIT, SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND ANDREA KNOWLTON, SPECIAL INFANT SPECIALIST, SAN FRANCISCO SPECIAL INFANT SERVICES, FOR THEIR MOST VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TRANSITION COMPONENT OF THE MODEL.

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT STIP (SUPPORTED TRANSITION TO INTEGRATED PRESCHOOLS) IS A MODEL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FUNDED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OPERATING WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE PROJECT WAS FUNDED TO DEVELOP AND EVALUATE A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (THREE TO FIVE YEARS OF AGE) WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INTO REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS. THE MODEL IS APPROPRIATE FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY OF DISABILITIES WHO ATTEND SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS WHICH ARE LOCATED ON THE SAME SITE AS OR LOCATED CLOSELY TO REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS. IT IS A MODEL WHICH CAN BE USED TO MAXIMIZE INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN ON A SITE-BY-SITE BASIS.

PROJECT STIP ALSO DEVELOPED AND EVALUATED A DISTRICT-WIDE MODEL FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AS THEY AND THEIR CHILDREN MAKE THE TRANSITION INTO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM. THE MODEL WAS DESIGNED TO GIVE PARENTS INFORMATION WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WHEN DEVELOPING THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND TO ADJUST TO A NEW AND DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS MANUAL WAS SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HANDICAPPED CHILDREN'S EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM, GRANT # G008530068. THE CONTENT AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE POSITION OR POLICY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND NO OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT SHOULD BE INFERRED.

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SUPPORTING PARENTS DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL

JANET AND TIM, THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF TWO-AND-ONE-HALF YEAR OLD DEAN, RECENTLY LEARNED THAT THEIR SON HAS NEUROFIBROMATOSIS. THEY WERE HAVING DIFFICULTY FINDING A PRESCHOOL FOR THEIR SON, AS DEAN HAD BEEN ASKED TO LEAVE TWO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS BECAUSE HIS BEHAVIOR WAS DISRUPTIVE TO THE OTHER CHILDREN IN THESE PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION, JANET AND TIM WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT DEAN'S DELAYED LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT. THEY CONTACTED THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND WERE REFERRED TO THE LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM. WHILE LEARNING ABOUT SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, JANET AND TIM EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT EDUCATING THEIR SON IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEM, THE EFFECTS OF PLACEMENT IN A SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM, AND THEIR SON'S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AFTER PRESCHOOL. THEY WERE FRIGHTENED THAT THEY WOULD LOSE CONTROL OVER MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT DEAN'S EDUCATION AND WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BE AN ACTIVE PART OF HIS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH IT TOOK JANET AND TIM SIX MONTHS TO DECIDE TO UTILIZE SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVICES, DEAN IS NOW ATTENDING A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DISORDERS OF LANGUAGE. HIS PARENTS ARE VERY PLEASED WITH HIS PROGRESS AND WITH THEIR CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT IN HIS PROGRAM.

THERESA HAD ATTENDED AN INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAM WITH HER DAUGHTER, ANA, FOR TWO YEARS PRIOR TO MAKING THE TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL. DURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANA'S PRESCHOOL IEP, THERESA RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE STAFF OF THE INFANT PROGRAM AND FELT SATISFIED WITH ANA'S IEP AND PLACEMENT IN AN INTEGRATED SELF-CONTAINED PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM FOR CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES. SHE WAS, HOWEVER, HAVING DIFFICULTY ADJUSTING TO THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED WITH ANA'S PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, AS SHE HAD ANTICIPATED THE SAME INTENSE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT THAT HAD OCCURRED AT THE INFANT PROGRAM. SHE FELT THAT SHE WAS NOT BEING INFORMED OF ANA'S DAILY PROGRESS AT SCHOOL AND WAS NOT RECEIVING SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO HELP HER DAUGHTER AT HOME. IN ADDITION, IT WAS VERY STRESSFUL FOR HER TO BE SEPARATED FROM ANA. WITH THE SUPPORT OF ANOTHER PARENT AND THE ASSISTANCE OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL, THERESA SHARED THE HISTORY OF HER DAUGHER'S FRAGILE INFANCY WITH ANA'S TEACHER, HELPING THE TEACHER UNDERSTAND THERESA'S RELUCTANCE TO BE AWAY FROM ANA AND HER NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM. IN ADDITION, THEY DEVELOPED A SCHEDULE OF HOME VISITS, TELEPHONE CALLS, CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS, AND NOTE WRITING THAT ALLOWED THERESA AND ANA'S TEACHER TO COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY AND TO PROVIDE THERESA WITH THE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SHE NEEDED.

ALTHOUGH THE PARENTS IN BOTH OF THE ABOVE EXAMPLES HAD DIFFERENT CONCERNS DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION, APPROPRIATE SUPPORT SERVICES ASSISTED THEM DURING THIS TIME. JANET AND TIM NEEDED INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. VISITING

SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS PRIOR TO THEIR IEP MEETING, HAVING AN ADVOCATE PRESENT DURING THE IEP MEETING, AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK ABOUT THEIR SON'S ABILITIES DURING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ASSESSMENT HELPED THEM FEEL REASSURED ABOUT THE QUALITY OF SERVICES AVAILABLE AND THEIR ROLE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. JANET AND TIM ALSO NEEDED TIME TO ADJUST TO THEIR SON'S DIAGNOSIS AND TO DEVELOP A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY THAT WOULD GUIDE THEM IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT DEAN'S EDUCATION. THERESA NEEDED SUPPORT IN ORDER TO EXPRESS HER NEEDS TO HER DAUGHTER'S TEACHER AND WAS RELIEVED TO BE ABLE TO DISCUSS HER CONCERNS WITH ANOTHER PARENT. BOTH FAMILIES BENEFITED BY BEING AN ACTIVE PART OF THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT, SUCH AS THAT PROVIDED TO THE FAMILIES DISCUSSED ABOVE, CAN BE HELPFUL IN FACILITATING THE CHILD AND PARENTS' TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS. THE FIRST STEP IN PROVIDING THIS SUPPORT IS TO UNDERSTAND PARENT CONCERNS.

PARENT CONCERNS AND ISSUES

YOUNG CHILDREN AND PARENTS MAKE THE TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL WITH DIFFERENT CONCERNS AND DIFFERENT NEEDS. SOME PARENTS AND CHILDREN HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAMS, SOME HAVE BEEN ATTENDING REGULAR EDUCATION DAY CARE/PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS, AND SOME HAVE NEVER BEEN INVOLVED WITH AN EDUCATION OR DAY CARE AGENCY/PROGRAM PRIOR TO THE TRANSITION. SOME CHILDREN MAY HAVE SEVERE AND MULTIPLE DISABILITIES AND OTHERS MAY HAVE MILD LEARNING HANDICAPS. REGARDLESS OF THE FAMILY'S BACKGROUND AND THE CHILD'S NEEDS, MAKING THE TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CAN BE A CHALLENGING AND STRESSFUL TIME FOR FAMILIES. DURING THIS TIME, PARENTS MUST MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION AND MUST CONFRONT A VARIETY OF ISSUES SURROUNDING THEIR CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS.

DESPITE THE UNIQUE CONCERNS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS AT THIS TIME, THESE PARENTS SHARE MANY UNCERTAINTIES WITH PARENTS OF NONDISABLED CHILDREN. MOST PARENTS ARE APPREHENSIVE WHEN CHILDREN FIRST ENTER SCHOOL OR DAY CARE, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THIS IS DONE AT A PRESCHOOL OR KINDERGARTEN AGE LEVEL AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SPECIAL EDUCATION OR REGULAR EDUCATION/DAY CARE SERVICES WILL BE USED. SOME OF THE ISSUES ABOUT WHICH PARENTS MAY BE CONCERNED AT THIS TIME INCLUDE:

- BEING SEPARATED FROM THEIR CHILD FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND WORRYING THAT THEIR CHILD MAY NOT NEED THEM ANY LONGER

- WONDERING WHAT THEY WILL NOW DO WITH THEIR EXTRA FREE TIME
- THE CARE OF THEIR CHILD BY A "STRANGER"
- THEIR CHILD'S SAFETY IN A SITUATION WHERE THE ADULT:CHILD RATIO IS GREATER THAN IT WAS WHEN THE PARENT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILD
- WONDERING IF THEIR CHILD WILL BE APPRECIATED BY THE ADULTS WHO ARE NOW CARING FOR AND TEACHING HER
- THEIR CHILD'S ACCEPTANCE BY CLASSMATES
- THE CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT
- ARRANGING FAMILY ROUTINES AROUND THE SCHEDULE OF THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

IN ADDITION TO THE APPREHENSIONS THAT ARE SHARED WITH THE PARENTS OF NONDISABLED CHILDREN DURING THIS TIME OF TRANSITION, PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS HAVE CONCERNS WHICH ARE UNIQUE TO THEIR SITUATION. SOME OF THESE CONCERNS ARE:

- CONFRONTING THE FACT THAT THEIR CHILD REQUIRES PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
- HAVING THEIR CHILD "LABELED" IN ORDER TO RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
- LEARNING ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES, THE IEP PROCESS, AND THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- LOSING CONTROL OVER THEIR CHILD'S DAILY ACTIVITIES
- NO LONGER BEING A WELCOMED PARTICIPANT IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION PROGRAM
- THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR CHILD'S IEP AND THE DELIVERY OF RELATED SERVICES
- ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT WITH A NEW GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS
- HAVING MISGIVINGS ABOUT THEIR CHILD BEING TRANSPORTED TO SCHOOL ON A BUS

IF THE FAMILY HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN AN INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAM PRIOR TO PRESCHOOL, PARENTS MAY HAVE ADDITIONAL CONCERNS SUCH AS:

- "LETTING GO" OF THESE SUPPORTS WHICH WERE SO CRUCIAL DURING THEIR CHILD'S INFANCY

- REDUCING OR CHANGING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

- MOVING FROM THE SECURE ENVIRONMENT OF THE INFANT PROGRAM TO THE UNFAMILIAR BUREAUCRACY OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

- SEEING THEIR CHILD AS ONE IN A GROUP OF SIMILAR CHILDREN IN A HETEROGENEOUS CATEGORICAL PROGRAM AS CONTRASTED WITH THE MORE HOMOGENEOUS GROUPING IN INFANT PROGRAMS

IF THEIR CHILD IS PLACED IN A SEGREGATED PROGRAM, THE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THEIR CHILD MAY BE PAINFUL. HOWEVER, IF THEIR CHILD IS ATTENDING AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM, THESE ADDITIONAL ISSUES MAY BE OF CONCERN TO PARENTS:

- THE ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR CHILD BY REGULAR EDUCATORS AND NONDISABLED PEERS

- THEIR CHILD'S SAFETY IN WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS A LESS PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT THAN A SEGREGATED SETTING

- THE EFFECT ON SIBLINGS IF THE CHILDREN ATTEND THE SAME SCHOOL AND IF THE SIBLINGS' FRIENDS LEARN OF CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS FOR THE FIRST TIME BECAUSE OF THE INTEGRATED SETTING

- THE QUALITY AND INTENSITY OF THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

THE POTENTIAL STRESS FOR FAMILIES DURING THIS TIME OF TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL ARE SIMILAR TO THE STRESSES WHICH FACE ANY FAMILY DURING A LIFE CYCLE TRANSITION. THAT IS, FAMILY MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO UTILIZE NEW RESOURCES AND INFORMATION, MAKE DECISIONS WHICH WILL AFFECT THEIR FUTURE, AND ADOPT NEW ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW AND UNFAMILIAR SITUATION. HOWEVER, WHILE PARENTS MAY BE EXCITED ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM WILL PROVIDE THEIR CHILD, THE ISSUES WHICH CONFRONT PARENTS DURING THEIR CHILD'S TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL OFTEN SERVE TO HIGHLIGHT THEIR CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS. AS ONE PARENT STATED,

> "I THINK ONE THING THAT I COULD HAVE BEEN TOLD WAS THAT IT'S A PROCESS. IT'S A PROCESS THAT TAKES YEARS, AND EVERY TIME SOMETHING CHANGES, IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFERENT. AND YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH IT. EVERY CHANGE YOU GO THROUGH IS GOING TO BE A REMINDER THAT IT'S DIFFERENT FOR YOU AND THAT IT'S DIFFERENT FOR YOUR CHILD AND THAT IT'S HARD."

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING PROVIDING SUPPORT

THE PROJECT STIP MODEL FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO PARENTS DURING THEIR TRANSITION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION IS DESIGNED 1) TO PROVIDE PARENTS WITH THE INFORMATION AND SKILLS WHICH WILL ALLOW THEM TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH THEIR SCHOOL DISTRICT WHEN DEVELOPING THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND 2) TO FACILITATE THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO RECEIVING SERVICES FROM AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND A SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL WHICH ARE UNFAMILIAR AND DIFFERENT. THE MODEL IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTIONS:

- A WIDE RANGE OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE IN ORDER TO MEET INDIVIDUAL FAMILY NEEDS. THESE SERVICES SHOULD BE BASED ON THE NEEDS OF EACH COMMUNITY AND ON THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY EACH PARENT DURING THEIR TRANSITION.

- PARENTS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE TRANSITION IN WAYS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR EACH PARTICULAR FAMILY. HOWEVER, A MAJOR FOCUS OF INVOLVING PARENTS IS TO EMPOWER THEM WITH THE COMPETENCIES TO ADJUST TO NOT ONLY THE PRESENT TRANSITION, BUT FUTURE TRANSITIONS AS WELL, BY CAPITALIZING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS, INDIVIDUAL COPING STYLES, AND PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

- IF THE FAMILY IS MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM ANOTHER PROGRAM, THIS "SENDING" PROGRAM SHOULD COLLABORATE WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO HELP FACILITATE A SMOOTH TRANSITION BY COMBINING RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE AND BY PREVENTING A DISRUPTION IN SUPPORT TO PARENTS.

- THE STRESS WHICH FAMILIES MAY FEEL DURING THE TRANSITION IS A NORMAL PART OF FACING THE CHALLENGES OF AND ADAPTING TO A LIFE CYCLE TRANSITION. APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES CAN HELP REDUCE THE STRESS.

IDENTIFYING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES HAVE DIFFERENT ISSUES AND DIFFERENT CONERNS DURING THE TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL AND, THEREFORE, HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS. SUPPORT SERVICES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED BASED ON THESE NEEDS. THE FOLLOWING FORM WAS USED BY PROJECT STIP TO IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF PARENTS IN THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO. PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS WHO HAD SUCCESSFULLY MADE THE TRANSITION AND PARENTS OF INFANTS WHO WERE ANTICIPATING THE TRANSITION WERE SURVEYED. THE FORM BELOW WAS USED BY PARENTS OF INFANTS. A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VERSION WAS COMPLETED BY PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS. THE FORM CAN BE ADAPTED FOR USE IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES OR FOR USE BY INDIVIDUAL PARENTS.

Parent Transition Needs Survey Form

Information Needs

Listed below is information which may be helpful to you as your child enters a preschool special education classroom in San Francisco Unified School District at the age of three. Please circle the number under the column that best describes how helpful the information might be to you.

NH = not at all helpful SH = somewhat helpful
H = helpful VH = very helpful EH = extremely helpful

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	1. How helpful would it be to receive information about child development from ages three to five years?
1	2	3	4	5	2. How helpful would it be to receive information about what your child may be learning in the new classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	3. How helpful would it be to receive information about how your child's new classroom may be different from your child's infant program?
1	2	3	4	5	4. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to prepare your child for a new classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	5. How helpful would it be to receive information about preschool classes in the school district?
1	2	3	4	5	6. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to visit special education preschool classrooms in the school district?
1	2	3	4	5	7. How helpful would it be to receive information about what to look for when you visit preschool special education classrooms?
1	2	3	4	5	8. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to contact the school district when your child is nearing the age of three?
1	2	3	4	5	9. How helpful would it be to receive information about assessing your child? That is, receive information about what the school district needs to know about your child in order to develop an IEP.
1	2	3	4	5	10. How helpful would it be to receive information about what to expect from and how to prepare for an IEP meeting?

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	11. How helpful would it be to receive information about what related services are available in the school district? Related services include services such as transportation, speech and language therapy, and physical therapy.
1	2	3	4	5	12. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to get related services for your child?
1	2	3	4	5	13. How helpful would it be to receive information about what to do if you are not happy with your child's educational plan (IEP)?
1	2	3	4	5	14. How helpful would it be to receive information about how your child is placed in a special education classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	15. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to communicate with your child's new teacher?
1	2	3	4	5	16. How helpful would it be to receive information about how you can be involved in your child's new classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	17. How helpful would it be to receive information about how to discuss problems with your child's new teacher?
1	2	3	4	5	18. How helpful would it be to receive information about your legal rights?
1	2	3	4	5	19. How helpful would it be to receive information about community services for you and your family?
1	2	3	4	5	20. Other _____
					_____
					_____

Service Needs

Listed below are services which might be helpful to you as your child enter a preschool special education classroom in San Francisco Unified School District at the age of three. Please circle the number under the column that best describes how helpful the service might be to you.

NH = not at all helpful SH = somewhat helpful
H = helpful VH = very helpful EH = extremely helpful

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	1. How helpful would it be to have one particular person in the school district with whom you could discuss your concerns as your child entered a special education classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	2. How helpful would it be to be able to discuss your concerns with another parent?
1	2	3	4	5	3. How helpful would it be to have a special education professional visit preschool classrooms with you?
1	2	3	4	5	4. How helpful would it be to have another parent visit preschool classrooms with you?
1	2	3	4	5	5. How helpful would it be to meet with school district personnel to learn about school district policies, procedures, and services before your child enters a preschool classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	6. How helpful would it be to be able to borrow books or other materials which discuss special education preschool classrooms?
1	2	3	4	5	7. How helpful would it be to be able to have meetings with other parents and special education professionals to discuss child development?
1	2	3	4	5	8. How helpful would it be to be able to have group meetings with other parents and special education professionals to discuss the education of three to five year old children?
1	2	3	4	5	9. How helpful would it be to be given a booklet about preschools and school district services and policies before your child starts to attend a special education classroom in the school district?
1	2	3	4	5	10. Other _____

_____

_____

The results of surveying parents of infants and preschoolers in San Francisco showed that they were most interested in receiving information about 1) available related services, 2) how to

OBTAIN RELATED SERVICES, 3) PLACEMENT PROCEDURES, 4) PROCEDURES WHEN THE IEP IS NOT SATISFACTORY, AND 5) THE IEP MEETING. THE THREE SERVICE NEEDS MOST OFTEN IDENTIFIED BY PARENTS AS BEING EXTREMELY HELPFUL WERE 1) RECEIVING A BOOKLET ABOUT SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES AND PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION BEFORE MAKING THE TRANSITION, 2) HAVING ONE PERSON IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AVAILABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS, AND 3) BEING ABLE TO BORROW BOOKS AND OTHER WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION. THESE RESULTS INDICATE THAT PARENTS FIND INFORMATION AND SERVICES WHICH WILL PROVIDE THEM WITH THE KNOWLEDGE TO REMAIN AN ACTIVE PART OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND WHICH WILL ALLOW THEM TO OBTAIN THE PARTICULAR EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR CHILD TO BE THE MOST HELPFUL.

PROVIDING A RANGE OF TRANSITION SUPPORT SERVICES

PARENTS CAN RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT AVAILABLE TRANSITION SUPPORT SERVICES THROUGH THEIR CHILD'S INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAM OR THROUGH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WHEN THEY FIRST REFER THEIR CHILD FOR PRESCHOOL SERVICES. IN ADDITION, PARENTS CAN BE INFORMED OF THE SUPPORT SERVICES THROUGH OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO THE COMMUNITY. THAT IS, INFORMATION CAN BE DISSEMINATED THROUGH PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS, REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL AND DAY CARE PROGRAMS, PEDIATRICIANS, AND OTHER AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS WHICH SERVE YOUNG CHILDREN.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPORT SERVICES DEVELOPED BY PROJECT STIP TO FACILITATE THE FAMILY'S ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM AND TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION TO INDIVIDUAL PARENTS ABOUT WORKING WITH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

- DISTRIBUTE A PARENT HANDBOOK WHICH PROVIDES DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IEP PROCESS AND PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROVIDES SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS PARENTS CAN ADJUST TO THE NEW PRESCHOOL PLACEMENT (MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MANUAL IS PROVIDED BELOW)

- LEND TWO VIDEOTAPES ENTITLED: "PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON MAKING THE TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL" AND "UNDERSTANDING A SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IEP MEETING" TO INDIVIDUAL PARENTS AND TO INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

- LEND BOOKS AND OTHER WRITTEN MATERIALS WHICH PROVIDE PARENTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS, PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION, AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM (A LIST OF PARENT RESOURCES IS PROVIDED BELOW)

- IMPLEMENT A PARENT-TO-PARENT NETWORK SO PARENTS ARE ABLE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM OTHER PARENTS WHO HAVE ALREADY SUCCESSFULLY MADE THE TRANSITION

- REFER PARENTS TO APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY RESOURCES, PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS, AND ADVOCACY AGENCIES

- ASSIST PARENTS TO MAKE PRETRANSITION VISITS TO PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

- WORK WITH PARENTS TO FORMALIZE THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT APPROPRIATE SERVICES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES FOR THEIR CHILD

- ATTEND IEP MEETINGS WITH PARENTS

- HELP PARENTS LOCATE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

THE PARENT TRANSITION MANUAL

PROJECT STIP'S MANUAL, MAKING THE TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL: A PARENT MANUAL CONTAINS THREE MAJOR SECTIONS WHICH PROVIDE PARENTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE IEP PROCESS AND PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES, AS WELL AS SUGGEST WAYS FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS AND TO ADJUST TO THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM. IN ADDITION, THE MANUAL INCLUDES A LIST OF WRITTEN RESOURCE MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO PARENTS, A SPECIAL EDUCATION DICTIONARY (WHICH DEFINES SPECIAL EDUCATION TERMS AS THEY ARE USED WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT), A COPY OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S IEP FORM, AND A LIST OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

THE SECTION OF THE MANUAL ENTITLED "REFERRAL, ASSESSMENT, IEP, AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES" IS ORGANIZED INTO THE SUBSECTIONS IDENTIFIED BELOW. EXCERPTS FROM THESE SECTIONS OF THE MANUAL ARE LOCATED IN APPENDIX A. THE EXCERPTS INCLUDE INFORMATION ON WAYS THAT PARENTS CAN BE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER EACH PHASE.

- A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF P.L. 94-142 AND P.L. 99-457

- A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE REFERRAL PROCESS

- A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

  -- THE PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT
  -- WAYS THAT PARENTS CAN PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENT
  -- WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE ASSESSMENT
  -- WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

- A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE IEP MEETING

  -- THE PURPOSE OF THE IEP MEETING
  -- WAYS THAT PARENTS CAN PREPARE FOR THE IEP MEETING
  -- WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE IEP MEETING
  -- THE WRITTEN IEP DOCUMENT
  -- WHAT HAPPENS FOLLOWING THE WRITING OF THE IEP, INCLUDING PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IF PARENTS DO NOT CHOOSE TO SIGN THE IEP

- A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

- A FLOWCHART, STARTING WITH THE REFERRAL TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ENDING WITH THE IEP BEING IMPLEMENTED

THE SECTION OF THE MANUAL WHICH CONTAINS INFORMATION ABOUT THE SPECIFIC SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND POLICIES FOR THE DELIVERY OF THESE SERVICES IS ENTITLED "PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES." IT IS DIVIDED INTO SUBSECTIONS WHICH CONTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- CHILDREN WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

- THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL WHICH IS USED IN THE DISTRICT AND HOW CATEGORICAL LABELS ARE USED

- ARRANGING PRETRANSITION VISITS TO THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAMS

- EDUCATION IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

- RELATED SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

A COPY OF THE SECTION OF THE MANUAL ENTITLED "ADJUSTING TO THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM" IS LOCATED IN APPENDIX A, ALONG WITH OTHER EXCERPTS FROM THE MANUAL DEALING WITH HOW PARENTS CAN PREPARE FOR AND EVALUATE DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE IEP PROCESS.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AFTER PLACEMENT IN THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

AFTER A CHILD IS PLACED IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, PARENTS MAY CONTINUE TO FEEL APPREHENSIVE AND ANXIOUS. THEY MAY BE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, THE COMPETENCE OF THEIR CHILD'S NEW TEACHERS AND THERAPISTS, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR CHILD'S IEP. RECOGNIZING AND RESPECTING THESE PARENT CONCERNS BY TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER PARENT QUESTIONS AND TO WELCOME PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM HELPS ALLEVIATE PARENT ANXIETIES AND, THUS,

FACILITATE THE TRANSITION. IN ADDITION, PARENTS NEED TIME TO ADJUST TO BEING SEPARATED FROM THEIR CHILD, TO FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IS APPROPRIATE, AND TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER. ALTHOUGH THE AMOUNT OF TIME REQUIRED BY EACH PARENT IS DIFFERENT, MOST PARENTS QUICKLY LEARN TO TRUST AND RESPECT THEIR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER AND THERAPISTS AND ARE PLEASED TO SEE THE PROGRESS THEIR CHILD IS MAKING IN THE NEW PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS ALSO HELPS FACILITATE THE TRANSITION, AS THESE INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES ASSURE PARENTS THAT THEY MAKE VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND WILL REMAIN AN ACTIVE PART OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. AS ONE PARENT STATED:

> "I HAD NO TROUBLE SENDING SHENTEL OFF TO SCHOOL. I WAS ONLY TOO EXCITED BECAUSE I DESPERATELY NEEDED TIME FOR MYSELF. BUT I WAS NOT READY TO GIVE UP MY ROLE AS EDUCATOR OF MY DAUGHTER TO SOMEONE ELSE. I DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE CONTROL OR SURRENDER MY CHILD TO THE TEACHERS. I WANTED TO CONTINUE TO BE PART OF THE PROCESS."

HOWEVER, BECAUSE EACH PARENT FEELS COMFORTABLE WITH A DIFFERENT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT, A VARIETY OF WAYS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE. SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO INVOLVE PARENTS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE TRANSITION ARE LISTED BELOW:

- SCHEDULE A PRETRANSITION VISIT WITH THE PARENTS TO DISCUSS THE CURRICULUM, PHILOSOPHY, AND DAILY SCHEDULE OF THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, TO ANSWER PARENT QUESTIONS, AND TO BEGIN TO LEARN ABOUT THE CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND NEEDS FROM THE PARENT.

- ENCOURAGE THE PARENTS TO ATTEND PRESCHOOL WITH THE CHILD DURING THE INITIAL PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT TO HELP DEVELOP A RAPPORT BETWEEN PARENT, CHILD, AND TEACHER AND TO REDUCE CONCERNS ABOUT THE CHILD'S SAFETY AND CARE.

- ESTABLISH AN ON-GOING COMMUNICATION SYSTEM WITH PARENTS AS SOON AS THE CHILD BEGINS TO ATTEND THE PRESCHOOL IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PARENT INFORMED ABOUT THE CHILD'S PROGRESS AND IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE TEACHER TO RECEIVE INPUT FROM THE PARENT. REGULARILY-SCHEDULED TELEPHONE CALLS, NOTEBOOKS SENT BACK AND FORTH FROM HOME TO SCHOOL, HOME VISITS, AND NOTES ABOUT CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES ARE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS.

- PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PARENTS TO VISIT OR WORK IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR SO PARENTS CAN

OBSERVE THEIR CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO AND PROGRESS IN THE NEW CLASSROOM.

- CREATE A PARENT GROUP SO THAT PARENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER DURING THE TRANSITION, LEARN OF COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUES WHICH MAY AFFECT THEIR CHILD'S SERVICES, AND LEARN ABOUT WAYS THEY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM.

IN ADDITION TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT, CREATING A NORMALIZED ENVIRONMENT BY STRUCTURING THE PHYSICAL, LEARNING, AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM TO BE AS SIMILAR TO A REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM AS POSSIBLE HELPS PARENTS MAKE THE TRANSITION. A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS LIKE THAT OF A REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL MAY HELP LESSEN THE IMPACT ON THE PARENTS OF PLACING A CHILD IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM. THE IMPORTANCE OF A NORMALIZED ENVIRONMENT TO PARENTS IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE FOLLOWING PARENT QUOTES:

> "I CHOSE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT LOOKED HEALTHY AND NORMAL. I WANTED HIM TO BE IN THE NORMAL WORLD. I WANTED A SENSE THAT THE CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM WERE PERCEIVED AS BEING GROWING CHILDREN AND WOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO BE AROUND REGULAR KIDS."

> "I REMEMBER THAT WHEN WE WERE VISITING THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS, I WOULD GET A KNOT IN MY STOMACH SEEING THE CHILDREN WHO WERE IN THE HANDICAPPED CLASSES. GOING INTO THE CLASSROOM THAT WAS APPROPRIATE FOR MY CHILD WAS TRAUMATIC. I DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK AT THOSE CHILDREN. I DIDN'T WANT TO LET THEM IN AND PHILOSOPHICALLY IT WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO ME TO NOT LET THESE CHILDREN INTO MY HEART."

A NORMALIZED PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENT WILL EMPHASIZE THAT THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ARE YOUNG CHILDREN WITH POTENTIAL WHO ARE GROWING AND LEARNING. LISTED BELOW ARE SUGGESTIONS FOR NORMALIZING A PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM.

- PROVIDE THE CHILDREN WITH OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY TO MAKE CHOICES, TO EXPLORE THEIR ENVIRONMENT, TO PROBLEM-SOLVE, AND TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES.

- DEVELOP A CURRICULUM AND DAILY SCHEDULE THAT ARE SIMILAR TO THAT OF A REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL. THAT IS, PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY, ART, AND MUSIC ACTIVITIES, ALONG WITH STRUCTURED, INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION.

- CHOOSE AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR THE CLASSROOM AND STORE THE TOYS IN A WAY WHICH ALLOWS THE CHILDREN TO HAVE INDEPENDENT ACCESS TO THEM.

- DECORATE THE ROOM USING BRIGHT COLORS, OPENLY DISPLAY THE CHILDREN'S WORK AT THEIR EYE LEVEL, AND DESIGN BULLETIN BOARDS THAT TEACH PRESCHOOL CONCEPTS. DIVIDE THE ROOM INTO INTEREST AREAS (E.G., A HOUSEKEEPING CORNER, AN ART AREA, A FINE MOTOR AREA, ETC.).

- RESPECT THE PARENT AND CHILD'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY WHEN POSTING IEP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, PROGRESS OR DATA CHARTS, AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS.

- STORE ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT, BOLSTERS, AND MATS IN A WAY THAT DOES NOT CALL ATTENTION TO THEM OR MAKE THEM THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE CLASSROOM.

- ESTABLISH AN AREA FOR TOILETING/DIAPERING WHICH IS SEPARATE FROM THE MAIN CLASSROOM AND AFFORDS THE CHILD PRIVACY.

- MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATION WITH NONDISABLED PEERS BY DEVELOPING MAINSTREAMED PRESCHOOLS, INTEGRATING INTO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOL AND DAY CARE PROGRAMS, AND REVERSE MAINSTREAMING NONDISABLED CHILDREN INTO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM.

SUMMARY

EVERY PARENT HAS A DIFFERENT WAY OF COPING WITH THEIR CHILD'S DISABILITY, HAS DEVELOPED A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY TO GUIDE THEIR DECISION-MAKING, AND ATTACHES DIFFERENT MEANING TO THEIR CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS. WHEN SUPPORTING PARENTS THROUGHOUT THEIR TRANSITION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL, THIS INDIVIDUALITY SHOULD BE RESPECTED. IN ADDITION, PARENTS CAN BE SUPPORTED BY LISTENING TO THEIR CONCERNS, BY PROVIDING THE INFORMATION AND SERVICES WHICH EACH PARENT IDENTIFIES AS BEING NEEDED AND IMPORTANT, AND BY ACTIVELY AND APPROPRIATELY INCLUDING PARENTS IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION. ONE PARENT DESCRIBED HER OWN ADJUSTMENT AS FOLLOWS:

"YOU HAVE TO TRUST YOUR CHILD. YOU HAVE TO TRUST THE INTEGRITY OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THESE SERVICES. YOU HAVE TO TRUST THAT THEY'RE THERE BECAUSE THEY CARE, NOT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO STUFF YOUR KID IN THE CORNER. FOR ME, THE LETTING GO PROCESS HAD TO DO WITH LETTING A BIGGER GROUP OF PEOPLE CARE ABOUT MY CHILD. AND IT WAS A MATURATION FOR ME - A FEELING THAT NOW I'M HEALED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AND I CAN HELP OTHER PEOPLE ACCEPT MY CHILD, RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND."

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INTEGRATING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF THE INTEGRATION COMPONENT OF PROJECT STIP ARE TO 1) MAXIMIZE INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 2) SUPPORT AND TRAIN REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS, AND 3) PROVIDE FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT. THE MODEL UTILIZES AN INTEGRATION SPECIALIST TO MEET THESE GOALS, AND IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY OF DISABILITIES INCLUDING LEARNING HANDICAPS, COMMUNICATION DISORDERS, PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS, AND MILD TO SEVERE DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY. IT IS A MODEL WHICH CAN BE USED TO DEVELOP AND EVALUATE INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES ON A SITE-BY-SITE BASIS WHERE SELF-CONTAINED SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS ARE LOCATED ON THE SAME SITE AS OR LOCATED VERY CLOSELY TO REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS.

RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATION

EDUCATORS AND PARENTS HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES FOR MANY YEARS. WHEN CAREFULLY PLANNED AND STRUCTURED, SUCH AN APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING CAN HAVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, NONDISABLED CHILDREN, REGULAR EDUCATORS, SPECIAL EDUCATORS, AND PARENTS OF BOTH GROUPS OF CHILDREN.

WHEN INTEGRATED, CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS RECEIVE THEIR EDUCATION IN A MORE DEMANDING AND CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT, THUS ENHANCING THEIR OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP AND GROW. THE CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO LEARN SKILLS IN ALL DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS THROUGH IMITATING THEIR NONDISABLED PEERS AND ARE ABLE TO LEARN AGE-APPROPRIATE SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH NATURALLY-OCCURING ENVIRONMENTAL CONTINGENCIES. CHILDREN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE INDEPENDENT AND DEVELOPMENTALLY ADVANCED SKILLS, FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT. IN ADDITION, INTEGRATION ALLOWS THE CHILD WITH A DISABILITY TO BE IN A NORMALIZED ENVIRONMENT, LEARNING TO BE A PART OF THE MAINSTREAM OF SOCIETY.

NONDISABLED CHILDREN ALSO BENEFIT FROM INTEGRATION. THROUGH POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, THEY CAN LEARN TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS AND LEARN TO APPRECIATE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. THE NONDISABLED CHILDREN MAY HAVE MORE CHANCES TO BE LEADERS OR TEACHERS, THEREBY INCREASING THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE. IN ADDITION, THEY ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FORM FRIENDSHIPS WITH THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

BOTH REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS CAN PROFIT FROM WORKING IN INTEGRATED SETTINGS. REGULAR EDUCATORS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT CHILDREN WHO HAVE DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES. BY INTERACTING WITH NON-

DISABLED PRESCHOOLERS, SPECIAL EDUCATORS BECOME AWARE OF TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN, THEREBY SETTING MORE REALISTIC AND AGE-APPROPRIATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. IN ADDITION, BOTH GROUPS OF TEACHERS CAN EXCHANGE INFORMATION ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES.

PARENTS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING INTEGRATED PRESCHOOLS ALSO CAN BENEFIT FROM INTEGRATION. PARENTS OF NONDISABLED CHILDREN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME AWARE OF DISABILITY ISSUES AND TO HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DISABLED. PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MAY BEGIN TO SET HIGHER EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILD, REALIZING THAT THEIR CHILD IS CAPABLE OF BEING SUCCESSFUL WITH AND ACCEPTED BY THEIR NONDISABLED PEERS. PARENTS MAY ALSO BE BETTER ABLE TO KEEP THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR CHILD REALISTIC, AS THEY HAVE THE CHANCE TO SEE THAT THEY HAVE MANY CHILD-REARING PROBLEMS IN COMMON WITH PARENTS OF NONDISABLED CHILDREN. FURTHER, BOTH GROUPS OF PARENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH EACH OTHER AND TO SHARE CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN.

INTEGRATION SPECIALIST

THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST PROVIDES SERVICES AS A CONSULTANT AND/OR ITINERANT TEACHER TO MEET PROJECT STIP'S GOALS OF MAXIMIZING INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES, SUPPORTING AND TRAINING REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF, AND INVOLVING PARENTS. (SUGGESTED COMPETENCIES FOR THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST ARE PROVIDED IN APPENDIX B.) THE SPECIFIC FUNCTION OF THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST VARIES FROM SITE TO SITE DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE STAFF, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES, BUT OFTEN INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- DESIGNING A VARIETY OF STRUCTURED INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES BASED ON THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY, CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES, SCHEDULE, AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN AND STAFF OF EACH INTEGRATED SITE

- SUPPORTING THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM BY MODELING TEACHING STRATEGIES, PROVIDING INSTRUCTIONAL AND ADAPTED MATERIALS AND CURRICULUM IDEAS, AND WORKING DIRECTLY WITH THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- CONDUCTING INSERVICE WORKSHOPS FOR THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF REGARDING CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES, BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, AND CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS

- ESTABLISHING AN ON-GOING METHOD OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS THAT MEETS THE UNIQUE NEEDS AT EACH SITE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A FORUM BY WHICH 1) THE ENTIRE SITE STAFF CAN DISCUSS CONCERNS REGARDING THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATION, 2) REGULAR EDUCATORS CAN LEARN ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS, AND 3) SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REGULAR TEACHERS CAN JOINTLY PLAN AND SCHEDULE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

- ASSISTING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS DEVELOP A PROCESS TO PLAN, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

- TRAINING SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONALS TO INTEGRATE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS BY PROVIDING IN-CLASS TRAINING FOR AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION TO THE PARAPROFESSIONALS

- ASSISTING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE PARENTS IN THEIR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

AS THE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES AND THE ON-GOING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS BECOME AN ESTABLISHED PART OF THE CURRICULUM OF THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS, THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST ASSUMES MORE THE ROLE OF A CONSULTANT AND LESS THE ROLE OF A DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDER. THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS THAT THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST CAN WITHDRAW TOTALLY FROM A SITE AND INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES WILL CONTINUE AT THE SAME OR AT AN INCREASED LEVEL.

MAXIMIZING INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

THE GOAL OF MAXIMIZING INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IS ACCOMPLISHED, IN PART, BY DEVELOPING A VARIETY OF INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES AT EACH SITE. BY DEVELOPING A VARIETY OF ACTIVITY OPTIONS AT EACH SITE, EACH CHILD CAN BE INTEGRATED DURING THE ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR THAT PARTICULAR CHILD.

ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES ARE STRUCTURED 1) TO FACILITATE THE INTEGRATED CHILD'S COMPETENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ON-GOING ACTIVITIES OF THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM, 2) TO ENCOURAGE THE CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO LEARN FROM THEIR NONDISABLED PEERS, 3) TO PROMOTE RECIPROCAL AND POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS OF CHILDREN, AND 4) TO DEVELOP ACCEPTING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES. DEPENDING ON AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES AT EACH INDIVIDUAL SITE, THE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- PARTICIPATING IN THE ON-GOING LEARNING AND PLAY ACTIVITIES OF THE REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS

- LEARNING IN SMALL INTEGRATED INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPS
- EATING LUNCH AND SNACK WITH NONDISABLED PEERS
- PLAYING WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN DURING RECESS
- ACCOMPANYING NONDISABLED PEERS ON REGULARILY-SCHEDULED TRIPS TO A NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- GOING ON FIELD TRIPS WITH NONDISABLED PEERS
- RECEIVING SPEECH AND LANGUAGE, OCCUPATIONAL, AND PHYSICAL THERAPY IN INTEGRATED GROUPS
- JOINING THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM CHILDREN FOR HOLIDAY PERFORMANCES AND CELEBRATIONS
- "REVERSE MAINSTREAMING" NONDISABLED CHILDREN INTO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS ON A REGULAR BASIS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY

INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES ARE FURTHER MAXIMIZED BY THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST BEING READILY AVAILABLE TO AND ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE RAPPORT WITH BOTH REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHING STAFF, AS WELL AS MAINTAINING CONTINUING COMMUNICATION WITH SITE ADMINISTRATION. BY BECOMING THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH THE CURRICULUM, SCHEDULE, PHILOSOPHY, AND INDIVIDUAL TEACHER'S EXPECTATIONS AT EACH SITE, THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST IS ABLE TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE CONCERNS AND NEEDS OF STAFF MEMBERS.

STRUCTURING THE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES IN A WAY WHICH ALLOWS THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF TIME TO ADJUST TO THIS NEW ASPECT OF THE CURRICULUM AND STRUCTURING THE ACTIVITIES IN A WAY WHICH DOES NOT PLACE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS ON THE STAFF ALSO CREATES ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATION. THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY:

- BEGINNING INTEGRATION AT EACH SITE WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO CAN BE FAIRLY INDEPENDENT WHEN INTEGRATED AND GRADUALLY EXPANDING INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES TO CHILDREN WHO ARE MORE DELAYED AND WHO REQUIRE STRUCTURED BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS, THUS ALLOWING THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF TO FEEL COMPETENT ABOUT INTEGRATION
- EXPECTING THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SAME ACTIVITIES AS NONDISABLED CHILDREN, TO FOLLOW ESTABLISHED CLASSROOM ROUTINES, AND TO ADHERE TO CLASSROOM RULES REGARDING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR WHEN IN THE REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL, AS THIS DOES NOT REQUIRE THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES IN THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

- REVERSE MAINSTREAMING INTO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM THE SAME NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE INTEGRATED, THEREFORE NOT INCREASING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

- PROVIDING SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER OR PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IN THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM WHEN CHILDREN NEEDING SUCH SUPPORT ARE INTEGRATED, THEREBY NOT REQUIRING THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADDITIONAL NUMBERS OF CHILDREN

SUPPORTING AND TRAINING REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF

A SECOND GOAL OF THE INTEGRATION COMPONENT OF PROJECT STIP IS TO SUPPORT AND TRAIN REGULAR EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS. THIS SUPPORT AND TRAINING IS DESIGNED TO DEVELOP THE COMPETENCIES AND ATTITUDES NEEDED TO ASSURE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION AND IS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH INSERVICE WORKSHOPS, IN-CLASS SUPPORT, AND CONTINUING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN REGULAR EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF. BECAUSE REGULAR EDUCATORS AT EACH SITE HAVE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND CONCERNS AND BECAUSE THE SUPPORT PROVIDED MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THESE NEEDS IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE, THE FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING SUPPORT IS TO IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF EACH SITE. THE FOLLOWING FORM WAS USED BY PROJECT STIP TO IDENTIFY THE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES NEEDS OF REGULAR EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

INSERVICE AND SUPPORT NEEDS SURVEY

INFORMATION NEEDS

LISTED BELOW IS INFORMATION WHICH YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW IF YOU WERE GOING TO BE TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN YOUR CLASSROOM. PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER UNDER THE COLUMN THAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW HELPFUL THE INFORMATION MIGHT BE TO YOU.

NH = NOT AT ALL HELPFUL SH = SOMEWHAT HELPFUL
H = HELPFUL VH = VERY HELPFUL EH = EXTREMELY HELPFUL

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	1. HOW IMPORTANT WOULD IT BE TO KNOW WHAT DISABILITIES ARE? THE DISABILITIES MIGHT INCLUDE LEARNING HANDICAPS, DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, COMMUNICATION DISORDERS, AUTISM, OR CEREBRAL PALSY.
1	2	3	4	5	2. HOW IMPORTANT WOULD IT BE TO KNOW WHAT CAUSES DISABILITIES?

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	3. How important would it be to know the reasons for having children with disabilities and nondisabled children learn and play together?
1	2	3	4	5	4. How important would it be to know what happens when children with disabilities and nondisabled children learn and play together?
1	2	3	4	5	5. How important would it be to know how children with disabilities develop and learn?
1	2	3	4	5	6. How important would it be to know how to manage the behavior of children with disabilities?
1	2	3	4	5	7. How important would it be to know how to encourage children with disabilities and nondisabled children to play together with each other?
1	2	3	4	5	8. How important would it be to know how to teach children with disabilities language, fine motor, preacademic, and cognitive skills?
1	2	3	4	5	9. How important would it be to know specifically about the children with disabilities with whom you would be working?
1	2	3	4	5	10. How important would it be to know how to tell nondisabled children about disabilities?
1	2	3	4	5	11. How important would it be to know the legal rights of children with disabilities and their families?
1	2	3	4	5	12. How important would it be to know about special services for children with disabilities? These services may include special education, physical therapy, or speech and language therapy.
1	2	3	4	5	13. How important would it be to know about special equipment that is used by children with disabilities? This equipment may include wheelchairs, hearing aides, walkers, and braces.
1	2	3	4	5	14. How important would it be to know how the parent of a child with a disability feels about their child learning and playing with nondisabled children?
1	2	3	4	5	15. Other

_____

_____

In-Class Support

Listed below are ways that a special education teacher could help you work with children with disabilities in your classroom. Please circle the number under the column that best describes how helpful the support might be to you.

NH = not at all helpful SH = somewhat helpful
H = helpful VH = very helpful EH = extremely helpful

NH	SH	H	VH	EH	
1	2	3	4	5	1. How helpful would it be to talk with you about the special needs of the children with disabilities you would be teaching before they come to your classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	2. How helpful would it be to talk with you about how to include the children with disabilities into the ongoing activities of your classroom before the children begin attending your classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	3. How helpful would it be to talk with you on a regular basis about your concerns about the children with disabilities who are attending your classroom?
1	2	3	4	5	4. How helpful would it be to have the special education teacher observe you teaching the children with disabilities in your classroom and offer suggestions?
1	2	3	4	5	5. How helpful would it be to have the special education teacher work with you in the classroom while you are teaching the children with disabilities?
1	2	3	4	5	6. How helpful would it be to have the special education teacher actually teach the children with disabilities in your classroom on a regular basis?
1	2	3	4	5	7. How helpful would it be to be able to consult with the special education teacher as often as you need?
1	2	3	4	5	8. How helpful would it be to have the special education teacher bring instructional materials to your classroom for the children to use?
1	2	3	4	5	9. How helpful would it be to have the special education teacher bring professional reading material about teaching children with disabilities to you?
1	2	3	4	5	10. Other

_____

_____

THE RESULTS OF SURVEYING THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF OF THE FIVE MODEL DEMONSTRATION SITES DEVELOPED BY PROJECT STIP SHOWED THAT THESE TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WERE MOST INTERESTED IN INFORMATION AND SERVICES WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM TO MANAGE THE BEHAVIOR OF AND TEACH THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS LEARN ABOUT THE UNIQUE SPECIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN WHO WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THEIR CLASSROOMS. THE RESULTS ALSO INDICATED THAT THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK FREQUENTLY AND REGULARILY WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A CRUCIAL SERVICE NEED.

THE METHOD BY WHICH THE SUPPORT IS PROVIDED TO REGULAR EDUCATORS DIFFERS, BASED ON THE SPECIFIC NEEDS AND CONSTRAINTS OF EACH SITE. HOWEVER, THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST USUALLY TAKES THE FORM OF WORKING IN THE REGULAR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IN ORDER TO MODEL INSTRUCTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES. BEING IN THE CLASSROOM ALSO ALLOWS THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO FACILITATE THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO THE REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOM. PROVIDING INSTRUCTIONAL AND ADAPTED MATERIALS AND CURRICULUM IDEAS IS AN ADDITIONAL FORM OF SUPPORT PROVIDED.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF SUPPORTING AND TRAINING THE REGULAR EDUCATION PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IS TO CONDUCT INSERVICE WORKSHOPS. THE CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOPS IS BASED ON THE INFORMATION NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF MEMBERS AT EACH SITE, AS WELL AS TOPICS SPECIFIED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION LITERATURE AND RESEARCH AS BEING IMPORTANT TO ASSURE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION. APPENDIX C CONTAINS COPIES OF FLIERS WHICH WERE DEVELOPED TO SUPPLEMENT THE INFORMATION PRESENTED TO THE REGULAR EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IN THE INSERVICE WORKSHOPS. THE TOPICS OF THE FLIERS ARE:

- RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATING YOUNG CHILDREN
- THE EDUCATION FOR ALL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN ACT
- WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT INTEGRATING YOUNG CHILDREN
- THE INTEGRATION TEAM
- PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE
- IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
- PROMOTING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
- TEACHING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING HANDICAPS
- ENHANCING DELAYED SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Adaptations for hearing impairments
- Integrating children with motor disabilities
- Adaptations for visual impairments

SUPPORTING SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Support for special educators provided by the Integration Specialist centers around developing a process at each site to initiate and evaluate integration activities. The specific process adopted by each site varies, but, in general, the Integration Specialist assists the special education teachers to identify and schedule appropriate integration activities, develop IEP integration goals and objectives for each child, and begin to reverse mainstream nondisabled children. In addition, the Integration Specialist is a catalyst to establish an on-going communication link between regular and special education staff and to resolve any difficulties that arise during the initial stages of integration. The Integration Specialist also provides support for the special education teachers by helping to train the special education paraprofessionals to integrate the children so that IEP goals and objectives can be achieved.

PROVIDING FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Because parent involvement is an important aspect of all early childhood programs, a major component of the Project STIP model is to provide for parent involvement in the integrated preschools. Parent involvement activities are tailored to meet each family's individual needs, but often include 1) observing their child in the special education classroom and during integration activities, 2) meeting with the Integration Specialist and other special education staff members at home or at school, 3) participating in IEP meetings, 4) receiving written notes and telephone calls regarding their child's progress, 5) volunteering to work at the child's school on a regular basis, 6) being an active part of their child's developmental assessments, and 7) organizing and attending parent meetings. These involvement activities provide parents with the opportunity to be an active part of making decisions about their child's education, to see their child participating successfully in the same activities as other young children, and to receive support from and be a support for other parents of children who have special needs.

As appropriate for each integration site, the Integration Specialist assists the special education teachers to establish

AND/OR TO EXPAND A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM. IN ADDITION, THE INTEGRATION SPECIALIST HAS DIRECT CONTACT WITH PARENTS BY PROVIDING THE PARENTS WITH INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESS AND THEIR CHILD'S EXERIENCES DURING INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES, DISCUSSING PARENTAL CONCERNS REGARDING INTEGRATION, ATTENDING IEP MEETINGS, ESTABLISHING PARENT GROUPS, AND MAKING HOME VISITS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND THERAPISTS.

SUMMARY

PROVIDING INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN THE PRESCHOOL YEARS HAS THE POTENTIAL OF BENEFITING TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND CHILDREN WHO ARE INVOLVED BY ENHANCING AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. HOWEVER, THE INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES MUST BE CAREFULLY PLANNED IF THE RESULTS ARE TO BE POSITIVE. THE ACTIVITIES MUST BE STRUCTURED TO PROMOTE RECIPROCAL AND POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS OF CHILDREN, TO ENCOURAGE THE CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO LEARN FROM THEIR NONDISABLED PEERS, AND TO DEVELOP IN THE NONDISABLED CHILD ACCEPTING ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR PEERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES. IN ADDITION, THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN PLANNING INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES. EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS TO PROVIDE FOR REGULAR EDUCATORS SUPPORT AND TRAINING WHICH WILL DEVELOP THE COMPETENCIES AND ATTITUDES NEEDED TO ASSURE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION. FURTHER, INDIVIDUALIZED PARENT INVOLVEMENT MOST LIKELY WILL ENHANCE THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSITION INFORMATION

PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S ASSESSMENT

Your participation in your child's assessment is important. Professionals can learn about your child from you. Because you are with your child a great deal, you are the best person to discuss your child's every day behavior and likes and dislikes. You also can learn about your child's strengths and weaknesses, learn about assessment procedures, and learn about educational terms by participating in your child's assessment.

Preparing for your child's assessment may help you be more involved in the assessment. Some things you might wish to do to help prepare are:

- Obtain whatever information you need to feel comfortable with the assessment process. It may be helpful to make a list of your questions and concerns about the assessment. Talk with professionals or parents before the assessment about the issues you have identified.

- Know your legal rights and responsibilities.

- Think about previous assessments in which your child has participated. What went well? What did not go well? What could be done to improve the assessment?

- Talk with other parents about their experiences with assessments. Discuss your concerns and listen to suggestions they may have.

- Determine what time of day your child is most alert and cooperative. Try to schedule the assessment for during that time.

- Collect information from other assessments of your child and take it with you.

- Request that an interpreter be present at the assessment if you do not speak English.

- If necessary, arrange ahead of time for child care and transportation.

The information that is collected during the assessment will be used to develop your child's IEP, so it is important that the assessment results be accurate and thorough. Listed below are questions you may want to ask yourself to decide if your child's assessment was fair.

- Was I included in the assessment by being present and given the opportunity to discuss the assessment plan?

- WAS I ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MY CHILD'S BEHAVIOR?

- WERE MY CHILD'S HEARING AND VISION CONSIDERED? IF IT APPEARED AS THOUGH MY CHILD MAY HAVE A HEARING OR VISION PROBLEM, WAS HE REFERRED FOR FURTHER ASSESSMENT IN THOSE AREAS?

- WAS MY CHILD'S NATIVE LANGUAGE USED? FOR EXAMPLE, IF MY CHILD USES SIGN LANGUAGE, WERE SIGNS USED DURING THE ASSESSMENT?

- DID THE EXAMINER CONSIDER CULTURE TRADITIONS WITH WHICH MY CHILD IS FAMILIAR?

- WERE ADAPTATIONS FOR MY CHILD'S HEARING, LANGUAGE, VISION, AND MOTOR PROBLEMS MADE?

- DID THE EXAMINER MAKE NOTE OF MEDICINE MY CHILD IS TAKING THAT MIGHT INTERFERE WITH HER ATTENTION, MOOD, WILLINGNESS TO WORK, OR GENERAL BEHAVIOR?

- DID THE EXAMINERS DEVELOP A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILD? DID THEY ENCOURAGE MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES?

- WERE ALL AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT EVALUATED? THAT IS, WERE MY CHILD'S FINE MOTOR, GROSS MOTOR, COGNITIVE, PRE-ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE, RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE, AND SELF-HELP SKILLS ALL ASSESSED?

- WAS MORE THAN ONE METHOD USED TO EVALUATE MY CHILD? FOR EXAMPLE, WAS MY CHILD OBSERVED IN STRUCTURED, UNSTRUCTURED, PLAY, AND/OR TEACHING SITUATIONS?

- WAS MY CHILD APPROPRIATELY AND ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES?

- DID MY CHILD GIVE AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF HER ABILITIES?

- IF MY CHILD BECAME TIRED OR STRESSED, WAS SHE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A BREAK?

- WAS MY CHILD FEELING HER BEST? IF NOT, WAS SCHEDULING ANOTHER ASSESSMENT AT ANOTHER TIME CONSIDERED?

- WAS I ASKED IF THE RESULTS WERE CONSISTENT WITH HOW I SEE MY CHILD? IF THEY WERE NOT, WERE MY OPINIONS AND PERCEPTIONS RESPECTED?

PREPARING FOR THE IEP MEETING

THE IEP IDENTIFIES WHAT EDUCATIONAL SERVICES YOUR CHILD WILL RECEIVE, SO IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT RELATING TO YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION. YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE IEP MEETING IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO ASSURE THAT YOUR CHILD RECEIVES AN EDUCATION WHICH WILL BEST MEET HIS NEEDS. BEING PREPARED FOR THE MEETING MAY HELP YOU BE AN ACTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBER OF THE IEP TEAM. SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO HELP YOU PREPARE ARE:

- FIND OUT ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES THAT ARE PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT.
- THINK ABOUT WHICH SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES ARE APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR CHILD. ALSO THINK ABOUT WHY THESE SERVICES ARE IMPORTANT.
- THINK ABOUT APPROPRIATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR CHILD. THAT IS, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CHILD TO BE LEARNING OVER THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR?
- THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR CHILD TO BE INVOLVED WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN. WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CHILD TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN DURING RECESS? EAT LUNCH WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN? ATTEND THE REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOM FOR PART OF THE SCHOOL DAY?
- TALK WITH OTHER PARENTS WHO HAVE ATTENDED IEP MEETINGS. THEY MAY BE WILLING TO SHARE THEIR CHILD'S IEP WITH YOU OR TO DISCUSS THE IEP MEETING.
- DISCUSS THE IEP MEETING WITH PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT IEPS.
- READ ABOUT YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.
- STUDY A SAMPLE IEP FORM WHICH WILL BE USED DURING THE MEETING.
- VISIT PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS.
- IF POSSIBLE, PLAN FOR BOTH PARENTS TO ATTEND THE MEETING.
- ASK AN ADVOCATE, A FRIEND, OR OTHER PROFESSIONALS TO ATTEND THE MEETING WITH YOU.
- REQUEST AN INTERPRETER IF YOU DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH.
- IF NECESSARY, ARRANGE AHEAD OF TIME FOR TRANSPORTATION OR CHILD CARE.

ADJUSTING TO THE NEW PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

MAKING THE TRANSITION INTO THE NEW PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM MAY BE STRESSFUL FOR YOUR CHILD, FOR YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER, AND FOR YOURSELF. YOUR CHILD MUST LEARN NEW CLASSROOM RULES, MAKE NEW FRIENDS, AND GET TO KNOW A NEW TEACHER. YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER MUST LEARN ABOUT YOUR CHILD AND HIS EDUCATIONAL NEEDS. BOTH YOUR CHILD AND YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER WILL NEED A PERIOD OF TIME TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER. YOU ALSO MAY NEED TIME TO LEARN ABOUT AND TO ADJUST TO YOUR CHILD'S NEW CLASSROOM.

THIS SECTION OF THE MANUAL PRESENTS SOME OF THE CONCERNS WHICH PARENTS MAY HAVE AS THEIR CHILD FIRST BEGINS TO ATTEND A SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM. THIS SECTION OF THE MANUAL ALSO HAS SUGGESTIONS WHICH MAY HELP YOU AND YOUR CHILD GET USED TO THE NEW CLASSROOM.

LEARNING YOUR CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS

IF YOU ARE LEARNING FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT YOUR CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS, YOU MAY NEED A PERIOD OF TIME TO ADJUST TO THE IDEA THAT YOUR CHILD WILL BENEFIT FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION. DURING THIS TIME, YOU MAY FEEL ANGRY, DEPRESSED, SHOCKED, GUILTY, AND/OR AFRAID. TALKING WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR PROFESSIONALS MAY HELP YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS AND YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS. YOU ALSO MAY WISH TO SPEAK WITH OTHER PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER OR OTHER PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM CAN HELP YOU FIND SUPPORT SERVICES AND INFORMATION FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

SEPARATING FROM YOUR CHILD

WHEN YOUR CHILD BEGINS TO ATTEND PRESCHOOL, IT MAY BE THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD HAVE BEEN APART FROM EACH OTHER. YOUR CHILD MAY BE AFRAID OF GOING TO SCHOOL AND MAY FEEL SAD OR ANGRY ABOUT BEING AWAY FROM YOU. YOU MAY FEEL YOUR CHILD IS TOO YOUNG TO GO TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY, IT MAY BE HARD TO TRUST SOMEONE ELSE TO CARE FOR YOUR CHILD, AND YOU MAY WORRY THAT YOUR CHILD WILL NOT LOVE OR NEED YOU ANYMORE. YOU MAY ALSO FEEL A LOSS OF CONTROL OVER YOUR CHILD'S DAILY ACTIVITIES.

TALKING ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND PROFESSIONALS MAY HELP. IT ALSO MAY HELP TO REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION BASED ON LOVE AND WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE BEST FOR YOUR CHILD. YOUR CHILD STILL WILL NEED AND LOVE YOU BECAUSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP YOU HAVE HAD WITH YOUR CHILD IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF HER LIFE. GET-

TING TO KNOW YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER ALSO MAY HELP YOU FEEL MORE SECURE ABOUT YOUR CHILD GOING TO SCHOOL.

IT ALSO MAY HELP TO REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN CAN BE WELL-CARED FOR BY MORE THAN ONE PERSON. MOST CHILDREN LOVE SCHOOL, ALTHOUGH AT FIRST THEY MAY BE AFRAID TO BE LEFT ALONE WITHOUT YOU IN THE NEW CLASSROOM. IF YOUR CHILD IS ANXIOUS AT FIRST, REMEMBER THAT THIS IS NORMAL. STAYING WITH YOUR CHILD THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF SCHOOL MAY MAKE HIM FEEL MORE SECURE. BEING SYMPATHETIC TO YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS, WHILE BEING POSITIVE ABOUT SCHOOL, ALSO MAY HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THE NEW CLASSROOM.

LEARNING ABOUT THE NEW CLASSROOM AND TEACHER

WHEN YOUR CHILD BEGINS TO ATTEND THE NEW PRESCHOOL SPECIAL CLASSROOM, YOU MAY BE ANXIOUS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S NEW PROGRAM. YOU AND YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER WILL BEGIN TO DEVELOP A WORKING RELATIONSHIP. BOTH YOU AND THE TEACHER WANT THE RELATIONSHIP TO BE POSITIVE AND FOR YOU TO BE PLEASED WITH YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION.

HOWEVER, DURING THESE FIRST FEW WEEKS WHEN YOU MAY BE MOST ANXIOUS, YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER OFTEN IS VERY BUSY. HE IS TRYING TO HELP YOUR CHILD ADJUST TO THE NEW CLASSROOM AND TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS. HE ALSO IS LEARNING ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL NEEDS. THIS TIME OFTEN IS FRUSTRATING FOR PARENTS AS WELL AS TEACHERS BECAUSE IT IS HARD TO FIND CHANCES TO TALK WITH EACH OTHER. MEETING YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER AND VISITING THE CLASSROOM BEFORE YOUR CHILD MAKES THE TRANSITION MAY HELP EASE THIS FRUSTRATION. LISTED BELOW ARE OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW CLASSROOM AND WORKING WITH THE NEW TEACHER.

WORKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH THE NEW TEACHER

YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER AND YOU HAVE THE SAME GOAL. YOU BOTH WANT YOUR CHILD TO HAVE AN EDUCATION WHICH WILL ALLOW HER TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. WORKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER WILL HELP YOUR CHILD GET THE BEST EDUCATION POSSIBLE. LISTED BELOW ARE SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO HELP YOU COMMUNICATE AND WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER. IN ADDITION, THESE IDEAS MAY HELP YOU ADJUST TO YOUR CHILD'S NEW CLASSROOM.

- MEET AND TALK WITH YOUR CHILD'S NEW TEACHER BEFORE YOUR CHILD BEGINS ATTENDING THE NEW CLASSROOM.

- VISIT THE CLASSROOM BEFORE YOUR CHILD BEGINS TO ATTEND.

- Go to the new classroom with your child for the first few days. Gradually leave your child alone at school for longer and longer periods of time.

- Plan to observe your child in the classroom on a regular basis.

- Share information about your child with the teacher. Let the teacher know your child's habits, food likes and dislikes, and favorite activities. You also may wish to discuss problems your child may be having at home that could affect school behavior or learning.

- Let the teacher know where you can be reached in case of an emergency or who to contact if you are not able to be reached.

- Try to schedule teacher conferences at times when children are not in school and you and the teacher are not in a hurry.

- Be involved in your child's education. Ways for being involved that best will meet your needs are discussed below in the section called "Parent Involvement."

- Arrange for a regularily-scheduled time to talk on the telephone with your child's teacher.

- Invite your child's new teacher to visit you at home.

- Ask your child's new teacher to telephone other professionals who know your child.

- Join the parent group at the new school. If the new program does not have a parent group, offer to organize one.

- Offer to work in the classroom during a specific activity (for example, a field trip, music time, a party) or volunteer to work on a regular basis.

- Discuss problems early before they get too big to handle.

- Remember that each classroom is different. If you have questions about your child's class, discuss them with the teacher.

Differences Between Infant and Preschool Programs

If your child attended an infant intervention program, you may notice that preschool special education classrooms are dif-

FERENT THAN INFANT PROGRAMS. THE WAY YOUR CHILD RECEIVES SERVICES WILL CHANGE AS SHE BEGINS TO ATTEND PRESCHOOL. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INFANT AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS BECAUSE YOUR CHILD HAS DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AS SHE GROWS AND DEVELOPS. AS YOUR CHILD GETS OLDER, MORE AND MORE EMPHASIS WILL BE PLACED ON HELPING YOUR CHILD TO BE INDEPENDENT IN HER LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT. YOUR CHILD WILL BE LEARNING HOW TO PLAY WITH OTHER CHILDREN, HOW TO CONTROL HIS OWN BEHAVIOR, AND HOW TO LEARN FROM OTHER CHILDREN IN GROUPS.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INFANT AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE:

- SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL: PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ARE CENTER-BASED. CHILDREN GO TO A CENTER (OR CLASSROOM) TO RECEIVE SERVICES. MANY INFANT PROGRAMS ARE HOME-BASED, WITH THE TEACHERS GOING TO THE HOME.

- LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY AND NUMBER OF DAYS PER WEEK: PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATE FIVE DAYS A WEEK FOR FOUR HOURS A DAY. THE TIME YOUR CHILD SPENDS ON THE BUS GOING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALSO MAKES THE DAY LONGER. YOUR CHILD WILL PROBABLY BE IN SCHOOL FOR MORE TIME THAN WHEN HE WAS ATTENDING AN INFANT PROGRAM.

- LOCATION OF THE PROGRAM: THE SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS ARE LOCATED ON PUBLIC SCHOOL CAMPUSES. YOUR CHILD WILL HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO BE WITH OTHER CHILDREN. THEREFORE, YOUR CHILD MAY BE LESS "SHELTERED" IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM THAN IN THE INFANT PROGRAM.

- GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION: A LOT OF TEACHING IN PRESCHOOLS IS DONE IN SMALL GROUPS. YOUR CHILD PROBABLY WILL RECEIVE MORE GROUP INSTRUCTION IN PRESCHOOL THAN IN THE INFANT PROGRAM.

- TRANSPORTATION: THE SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVIDES BUS TRANSPORTATION FOR CHILDREN ATTENDING PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS. THIS SERVICE MAY BE NEW FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD.

- PARENT INVOLVEMENT: WAYS FOR YOU TO BE INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM MAY BE DIFFERENT THAN YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR CHILD'S INFANT PROGRAM. SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO BE INVOLVED ARE DISCUSSED BELOW IN THE SECTION CALLED "PARENT INVOLVEMENT."

YOU MAY NOTICE ADDITIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUR CHILD'S INFANT AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS. IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THESE DIFFERENCES, DISCUSS YOUR OBSERVATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER.

Parent Involvement

The way you are involved in your child's preschool may be different than the way you were involved with your child's infant program. While at the infant program, you may have been involved by having professionals make visits to your home. When your child begins preschool, home visits usually are not made as often as when your child was an infant. Also, although you may have been very involved in your child's infant program by attending the program with your child, most parents do not accompany their child to the preschool classroom every day. This separation is a normal part of children growing up and allows your child to become more independent. In addition, many parents welcome the extra time they have for themselves and for other activities.

Even though you probably will not be going with your child to school everyday, you still may be involved in your child's education on an on-going basis. Suggestions for different ways that you can be involved are:

- talking on the telephone with your child's teacher
- sending notes to and receiving notes from the teacher
- talking briefly with your child's teacher while you drop off or pick up your child from school
- sending a small notebook (in which you and the teacher write notes) back and forth each day with your child
- receiving progress notes from your child's teacher
- attending IEP meetings and teacher conferences
- participating in home visits
- making or buying materials for your child's classroom
- observing your child in her classroom
- volunteering to work in your child's classroom regularly
- serving on community advisory boards
- attending parent support groups

You may be able to think of additional ways to be involved in your child's education. Your needs as a parent are as individual as your child's. Talk with your child's teacher about involvement activities which will be best for your child, family, child's teacher, and yourself.

Appendix B

INTEGRATION SPECIALIST COMPETENCIES

INTEGRATION SPECIALIST COMPETENCIES

DEMONSTRATES THE ABILITY TO:

- PROVIDE INSERVICE TRAINING FOR REGULAR EDUCATION STAFF AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONALS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL AND LEARNING NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
- UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS THE CONCERNS REGARDING INTEGRATION OF BOTH REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF
- COMMUNICATE WITH, SUPPORT, AND INVOLVE PARENTS IN THEIR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL INTEGRATION PROGRAM
- COLLABORATE WITH REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS REGARDING CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
- UNDERSTAND THE IEP PROCESS AND RELATED LEGISLATION, PARTICULARILY AS IT PERTAINS TO A CHILD'S LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)
- UNDERSTAND CURRENT RESEARCH FINDINGS REGARDING THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
- ADAPT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
- UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THESE PROFESSIONALS
- UNDERSTAND THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING AS THEY RELATE TO YOUNG CHILDREN AND APPLY THIS UNDERSTANDING TO PRACTICAL SITUATIONS
- UNDERSTAND THE COMPONENTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL AND REGULAR CURRICULUM, CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION, AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES
- ASSESS CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS IN ORDER TO DETERMINE STRENGTHS AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
- EVALUATE THE EFFECTS OF INTEGRATION ON CHILDREN, TEACHERS, PARAPROFESSIONALS, AND PARENTS AND MAKE CHANGES IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS IF WARRANTED BY THE EVALUATION
- INSTRUCT CHILDREN IN LARGE GROUPS, SMALL GROUPS, AND ONE-TO-ONE SITUATIONS
- FACILITATE POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION AMONG ALL STAFF OF A PARTICULAR INTEGRATION SITE

APPENDIX C

INTEGRATION INSERVICE FLIERS

Rationale for Integrating Young Children

There are many reasons to provide opportunities for children with disabilities to play, learn, and interact with their nondisabled peers. Integrating young children can be beneficial for both groups of children, as well as for their parents and teachers.

Nondisabled Children

Through positive interactions with children with disabilities, nondisabled children become sensitive to the needs of others and learn to appreciate individual differences at an early age. In integrated settings, nondisabled children may have more chances to be leaders or teachers, thereby increasing their self-confidence. The children also have the opportunity to form friendships with children who are disabled.

Children With Disabilities

When young children with disabilities are educated with their nondisabled peers, they learn age-appropriate social and play skills by imitating nondisabled children. Integrated settings provide a challenging environment for the child who is disabled. Therefore, the children learn more independent and developmentally advanced skills. Also, by being with nondisabled children, the child who is disabled may develop a more positive self-image by having the opportunity to do what other children do.

Teachers

Both regular education and special education teachers can learn by teaching in integrated settings. Regular education teachers have the opportunity to learn about disabilities and special education. Special education teachers have frequent contact with normally developing children and, therefore, have more realistic expectations for the children they teach. In addition, both groups of teachers can exchange information about instructional activities and teaching strategies.

Parents

When their children attend integrated preschools, parents of children with disabilities have the opportunity to see that many behaviors about which they may have been concerned are typical of most young children. Also by seeing their child accepted by others and successful in integrated settings, parents may feel better about themselves and their child. Parents of nondisabled children can help their child develop positive attitudes toward individuals who are disabled and have the chance to become acquainted with other parents.

Providing positive experiences in integrated early childhood educational settings allows nondisabled children and adults to learn about disabilities and to become more accepting of individuals who are disabled. Children with disabilities have the opportunity to develop their full potential and to become an integral part of society. Therefore, integration can expand and enhance the personal experiences of children, parents, and teachers.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (often referred to as PL 94-142) requires that every child with a handicap be provided a free and appropriate public education. The law also protects the rights of children and their parents by guarantees of due process. In addition, PL 94-142 mandates that children be educated in their least restrictive environment.

Least Restrictive Environment

Educating children with handicaps in their least restrictive environment (LRE) means that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with handicaps are to be educated with children who are not handicapped. This does not mean that all children with handicaps will be placed in regular education classrooms. Each child's LRE is different and is determined by the child's unique developmental needs. Educating young children in their least restrictive environment allows each child to learn and develop in a normalized setting with as few restrictions as possible. The LRE appropriate for each child should be identified in his or her Individualized Education Program.

Individualized Education Program

PL 94-142 requires that an Individualized Education Program (called an IEP) be written for each child in special education. A child's IEP is the key to assuring that he or she receives an appropriate education. It is written during a meeting with representatives of the educational agencies which will provide services, the child's teacher and therapist, and the child's parent or guardian. An IEP includes the following components: a statement of the child's present level of educational performance, the annual goals and short-term instructional objectives, a description of educational services to be provided, a determination of the child's participation in regular educational programs, the beginning and anticipated ending dates for special education services, the procedures which will be used to determine whether instructional objectives are being met, and a schedule for evaluating the child's progress.

Due Process

Due process provisions which protect the rights of children and their parents are included in PL 94-142. The law states that parents have the right to examine their child's school records and to request the removal of inaccurate or misleading information, the right to an independent evaluation of their child, and the right to receive written notice in their native language of any school action that may change the identification or placement of their child. Parents also have the right to an impartial due process hearing where they may challenge the school system's decision. The decisions of this hearing may be appealed to the state department of education and then to the civil courts.

What is Known About Integrating Young Children

More and more young children with disabilities are being integrated into regular education early childhood programs. Observations of children in these integrated settings, results of questionnaires and surveys, case studies of children, and anecdotal reports of parents and teachers tell us the following about integrating preschool children:

- Nondisabled children learn language, cognitive, play, social, motor, and perceptual skills at the expected rate in integrated settings.
- Children with disabilities learn skills and make developmental gains when attending integrated classrooms.
- Nondisabled children usually do not imitate developmentally delayed behaviors that children with disabilities may exhibit. If they do, the imitative behavior does not continue unless it is reinforced by adults.
- Children with disabilities do not imitate spontaneously their nondisabled peers. They must be taught to learn in this way.
- Integrating children who are disabled with nondisabled children does not insure that the two groups of children will play together. Nondisabled children often prefer to play with other nondisabled children, while children with disabilities may not have the social skills to play with others. However, special instruction can be very successful in encouraging the children to play together.
- Rejection of children with disabilities by nondisabled children is rare. The nondisabled children usually behave in ways which show that they are sensitive to the needs of other children. They show affection to, are gentle with, and attempt to encourage and teach their classmates who are disabled.
- Because they shape the emotional and social climate of a classroom, successful integration heavily depends on the attitude of teachers. An approach to teaching which appreciates the value and uniqueness of every child will help make integration a positive experience.

Project STIP

The Integration Team

The purpose of an "Integration Team" is to plan, implement, and evaluate integration activities for children who have special needs. The Team is composed of professionals who are involved with the education of the child who is being integrated, as well as the child's parents. Each member of the Team contributes a different viewpoint to the integration process. The Team works together to develop an appropriate integration plan for each child.

Team members also work together to develop a positive attitude toward integration. This positive attitude allows each child to be seen as a child who has unique abilities and strengths and encourages nondisabled children and children who have disabilities to learn and play together in an environment which supports acceptance of each child.

Parents

As part of the Integration Team, parents contribute valuable information which can help identify appropriate integration activities for their child. Information about how the child behaves and learns in settings outside the school, as well as information about family values, can be used to establish integration goals. In addition, parents can be part of the integration process by volunteering to work in the classroom, observing their child at school, and communicating with professionals.

Special Education Staff

Special education teachers and paraprofessionals, therapists, and social workers are among the special education professionals who may serve as members of the Integration Team. Their duties include assuming primary responsibility for organizing integration activities, as well as providing in-class support for regular education staff. Special educators also are responsible for assisting regular educators by helping them to understand children who are disabled, by offering behavior management and instructional suggestions, and by maintaining an on-going communication link with regular education staff and parents.

Regular Education Staff

Regular educators contribute to the integration process by sharing their perceptions of the ability of the child who is disabled to participate in the regular education classroom. While the child is integrated, the regular education staff is responsible for adapting methods and materials to help the child with special needs succeed. In addition, regular educators can provide valuable feedback to special educators and parents about the child's progress. It is also the responsibility of regular educators to request in-service and other support which they need to successfully integrate children into the regular education preschool classroom.

Administrative Staff

Because administators play a major role in establishing a school climate which supports integration, they are critical members of the Integration Team. Administrative responsibilities include providing input regarding curriculum issues, scheduling in-service training, and facilitating on-going communication between parents, regular education staff, and special education staff.

Parents' Perspective

Parents of children with special needs often have mixed feelings about integrating their child with nondisabled children. Although recognizing the benefits of integration, parents may be concerned that their child will be teased by and socially isolated from nondisabled children. In addition, they may worry that their child will be unable to participate in certain activities, resulting in further isolation of their child. During the preschool years, parents may feel that their child is too young to be the child who is "different." They also may be concerned that integration creates too much pressure for their child to keep up with nondisabled children.

Parents may worry that their child will not be accepted and appreciated by regular education staff members. Because regular education classrooms have more children than do special education classrooms, parents often wonder if their child will receive enough individual attention in the regular education classroom. In addition, they may wonder if the regular education staff is trained to respond to and meet their child's special needs.

Although having their child attend an integrated preschool may at first cause parents to focus on their child's differences and limitations, over time parents of young children with special needs often are able to see their child motivated to participate in and accomplish the same activities as other young children. They often are pleased to see their child learn by imitating nondisabled classmates.

Many parents feel that their child will develop a better self-concept by having the opportunity to learn and play with nondisabled children. Parents think that integrated preschools give their child who has special needs the opportunity to be challenged by and successful when interacting with nondisabled peers.

In addition, parents often think that integrated preschools expose their child to the real world early in life. This exposure helps children learn to adjust to and cope with living in a "nondisabled world." Parents are hopeful that integration beginning at an early age will allow their child who is disabled to live more independently and in a more normal setting as an adult.

Importance of Social Interactions

The opportunity for social interactions with others is very important for the development of all children. Through social interactions, children begin to establish a sense of "self" and to learn what others expect of them. Although social interactions for very young children primarily occur within the family, as children grow and develop, they become more and more interested in playing and interacting with other children. When playing with others, children learn appropriate social behaviors, such as sharing, cooperating, and respecting the property of others. In addition, while interacting with their peers, young children learn communication, cognitive, and motor skills.

Most opportunities for social interactions among young children occur during play. This opportunity to play with others is critical if a child is to develop appropriate social skills. Therefore, encouraging children with disabilities and nondisabled children to play together is an extremely important part of instruction in integrated preschools. The children must have the opportunity to play together if they are to become friends. These friendships will help the nondisabled child form positive, accepting attitudes toward persons who are disabled. In addition, the child who is disabled will have the opportunity to learn age-appropriate social skills.

Children who learn appropriate social skills often have a higher self-esteem and show a greater willingness to interact with their environment as they grow. Opportunities for social interaction not only enhance development in the early years, but also may be important for the future of the young child who is disabled. The ability to interact competently with others is a skill that is required throughout life and may affect future educational and vocational opportunities. Assisting young children who are disabled to learn through positive social interactions with nondisabled children may help them acquire skills from which they will benefit throughout their life.

Promoting Social Interactions

Interacting and playing with peers provides many learning opportunities for young children. In integrated preschool settings, nondisabled children and children with disabilities may need to be encouraged to play together. Social interaction between the two groups of children can be encouraged in a number of different ways. Suggestions for ways to use teacher attention and to structure the classroom to promote socially interactive play are discussed below.

Teachers and other adults can be very effective in promoting social interaction by encouraging children to play together and by praising them when they do. However, it is important to remember that too much adult attention may interfere with the children's interactions. It is a good idea, therefore, for adults to remove themselves from the play situation once children have begun to play together.

Teachers and other adults also can promote interactions by teaching children specific ways to ask other children to play, to share toys, to take turns, to express affection to, and to help other children.

Assisting children to control their aggressive behavior encourages the formation of friendships.

Planning small group activities that require cooperation and sharing motivates socially interactive behavior. For example, painting a mural or making soup as a group encourages children learn to work together.

Being certain that children with disabilities are seated next to nondisabled children makes it easy for the children to interact with and learn from each other.

Allowing the child who is disabled to lead activities, pass out materials, and be praised in front of his or her classmates helps the nondisabled child view the child who is disabled as a competent friend.

Toys such as blocks, dolls, dress-up clothes, trains, and cars promote social interactions much more than do toys such as beads, clay, puzzles, and paints.

Providing toys with which the child who is disabled can play competently encourages the children to play together.

Limiting the number of toys available and requesting that children play in a small area requires the children to share and engage in the same activity, thereby encouraging social interactions.

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Teaching Children with Learning Handicaps

Young children with learning handicaps are very similar to nonhandicapped children. They usually go through the same developmental stages (although at a slower rate) and have their own individual patterns of strengths and needs. When integrating children with learning handicaps into the regular preschool classroom, it is important to remember that children with learning handicaps, like all children, enjoy being independent and learn best when they can be successful. To help children with learning handicaps be successful and independent in the regular education classroom:

Keep your verbal directions simple. Using gestures (such as pointing) often helps a child realize what is expected. Remember that a child with a learning handicap may need a longer time to understand and respond to your directions.

Use gentle physical contact and guidance to direct a child's attention and behavior, as well as to express your affection toward the child.

Try to provide the opportunity for a child with a learning handicap to have an extra try or two at performing a skill. The extra chance may mean the difference between success and failure.

Arrange the environment in a way that will help a child with a learning handicap focus on the learning activity. For example, avoid instructional materials that have confusing backgrounds or crowded pages. You also may want to keep tabletops free of materials that the child is not using and encourage the child to work in quiet areas of the classroom.

Children with learning handicaps may have difficulty with classroom transitions. Warning the child in advance that an activity is going to change and being consistent about expectations during transitions may help the child manage transitions successfully.

Break learning tasks into small parts and help the child learn each part one at a time. For example, stringing beads requires the child to pick up the string and bead, to put the string through the hole in the bead, and to pull the string through the bead.

Children with learning handicaps may have short attention spans. Alternating active and quiet activities and alternating free play and organized learning activities may help a child pay attention.

Like other children, children with learning handicaps learn best when they are rewarded with adult attention and approval for their efforts.

Enhancing Delayed Speech & Language Development

A child with a communication handicap may have a speech impairment, a language impairment, or a combination of both. Children with speech impairments often have difficulty speaking in the correct pitch and tone of voice, pronouncing and sequencing the sounds used to talk, and/or speaking with normal rhythm and speed. Children with language impairments may have difficulty expressing their ideas in words and/or may have difficulty making sense of what they hear. A communication handicap may occur as the primary disability or may occur as part of another disability.

When integrating children with communication handicaps into regular education preschool classrooms, keep in mind that children learn language best when they have the opportunity to practice talking and listening and when language is meaningful to them. Remember also that children with communication handicaps may be shy about talking. Help the children feel secure by gently encouraging them to use the skills they have, while not asking them to do anything that will be frustrating or embarassing. Let the children know that any attempt at talking is appreciated.

To facilitate the language development of children with communication handicaps:

Listen attentively when a child speaks and respond to what the child has said. A child with a communication handicap may be difficult to understand at first, but understanding becomes easier as you get to know the child.

Remember to use names for objects and places and to use words for actions. For example, instead of saying "Put it over there," say "Hang your bag on the hook."

If a child is having difficulty expressing himself, listen without interrupting for him to finish speaking. Do not speak for the child.

Ask children open-ended questions instead of yes-no questions. Rather than saying "Are you painting," ask "What are you doing?"

A child who has difficulty understanding words may have problems responding immediately to simple verbal directions. It may help to show the child what to do at the same time you are telling her what to do, to use gestures along with the spoken word, and to give the child a little extra time to respond.

Try not to anticipate and meet a child's needs before the child expresses a need. Encourage the child to independently and spontaneously express his needs.

Expand on what a child says. For example, when a child says "Want ball," expand by saying "You want the ball." This shows the child he is understood and also shows him to express himself in a more developmentally advanced way.

Adaptations for Hearing Impairments

Children with hearing impairments may have difficulty hearing and understanding sounds because the sounds are not as loud as they are for other children and/or because the sounds are distorted and sound different. Although a hearing impairment usually has its greatest effect on a child's ability to talk and listen, a young child's skills in communicating with others may also affect the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Young children with hearing impairments need special help to develop their communication skills and to facilitate optimal growth in all areas of development.

Different approaches are used to teach young children with hearing impairments communication skills. The oral approach emphasizes teaching children to learn to listen and lip-read in order to develop spoken language. With a total communication approach, sign language is used along with oral communication. Because young children need consistency in the approach which is used to teach them how to communicate, it is important to discuss with parents and special education staff how you can support in the regular education classroom the method that has been identified as most appropriate for the child who is being integrated.

Regardless of the way a young child with a hearing impairment is learning to communicate, good lighting in the classroom and how you use the lighting is important. For example, when talking to the child in a group or one-to-one situation, try not to stand or sit with the light coming from behind you. Also try to remember to be sure that the light falls on your face so that shadows do not make it difficult to see your lips and eyes. Speak in a normal tone of voice and at a normal speed without exaggerating your lip movements. It is easier for the child to understand you and respond to your requests if you have her attention before speaking. Get the child's attention by moving close to her and getting down to her eye level. In a group situation, seat the child close to you.

Encourage the child who has a hearing impairment to use his voice. Ask the child questions and wait for a response. If you are unable to understand, ask the child to repeat what was said or to show you. You may also ask the child to imitate words you say, but be careful not to pressure the child to respond. Try not to correct the child's pronunciation. Instead, teach correct sounds by modeling them. However, do tell a child who has a hearing impairment if he is speaking too loudly or too softly.

Because of difficulties communicating, young children with hearing impairments may be socially isolated from their classmates. In order to facilitate social interactions, help the child with the hearing impairment be aware that other children are talking to her. Teaching the child the rules of games and the appropriate language for social situations also can help.

In addition, help the children who hear communicate with the child who has difficulty hearing. For example, teach them to look at the child's face when they speak. Also teach them to get the child's attention by talking louder, touching the other child, or trying a few extra times. Teaching children who hear to use sign language also helps all the children communicate with and learn from each other.

Integrating Young Children with Motor Disabilities

A child with a motor disability may have difficulty coordinating and controlling muscle movements and/or may have limited use of certain parts of her body. Children who have motor disabilities may require special services, training, or equipment in order to communicate, learn, and move through their environment. When children with motor disabilities are integrated into regular education preschool programs, it may be necessary to make adaptations to the classroom in order to allow the child to be independent and successful. Suggestions for ways to adapt the classroom environment are discussed below.

* *A child may need to be positioned in a certain way. Positioning refers to providing support for the child's body and arranging instructional materials in a specific way. Correct positioning helps a child be more comfortable and better able to participate in instructional activities. The special education teacher can show you the best way to position each child. Try to remember to position the children so that they have the chance to socially interact with their their nondisabled classmates.*

* *Allow each child to be as independent as possible. Even if a child is unable to complete an entire task by herself, give her the opportunity to do independently as much of the task of which she is capable.*

* *Children who use a wheelchair or walker may need more space to move through their environment, so try to provide enough room between pieces of furniture and equipment.*

* *Because children with walkers, crutches, and braces fall easily, try to keep the floor dry and free of loose area rugs.*

* *Children with motor disabilities may need extra time to complete an activity or to move to a different area of the classroom. Try to plan ahead to allow for this extra time.*

* *Loud noises may cause a child with cerebral palsy to straighten his arms and turn his head involuntarily. Loud noises also may be painful for a child who has a shunt. These children may need to be seated away from things (such as fire alarms, ringing telephones, or slamming doors) that produce loud noises.*

* *Children with motor disabilities sometimes tire easily and may require short rests between activities.*

* *Large instructional materials and toys may be easier for a child with a motor disability to manipulate.*

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Adaptations for Visual Impairments

When teaching young children with visual impairments, it is important to encourage the children to use the visual skills they have. The more the children practice looking at objects and people in their environment, the more they will be able to see because their remaining visual skills will be refined and developed.

- *Encourage the use of visual skills by allowing the children to bring objects and pictures close to their eyes, hold objects and pictures at whatever angle is best, sit close to you during story time, and sit close to the screen when a movie is shown.*

- *Remember to use simple illustrations and pictures and to avoid using glossy photographs.*

- *Try not to stand or sit with your back to bright light when you are talking with the child who has a visual impairment. If light causes pain for the child, he may need to work in an area of the classroom where the lighting can be reduced.*

- *When teaching, it is important to use the actual objects about which you are talking. A plastic apple is much different than a real apple in the way it feels, smells, and tastes. If possible, allow the children to hold and touch the objects.*

- *Remember that a child with a visual impairment may not be able to see the movements of other children and, therefore, may be unable to learn by imitating her classmates. You may need to help the child learn the correct postures for sitting, standing, and moving through space.*

- *Be sure to show a child with a visual impairment any changes you have made in the classroom. For example, have you moved the child's favorite toy to a new shelf? Is there a new table on which the child might trip?*

- *It is important to talk to the child about everything that is going on around him. Unless someone tells the young child who cannot see well what is happening in his environment, he may not understand the sounds he hears. In addition, he may not understand what happens to objects and people when they disappear from his limited visual field. For example, unless someone shows and tells him, a child who is unable to see will not know that his jacket (when it is removed) is hung on a hook in the closet because he cannot see it being taken there.*